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Identical letters dated 27 November 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I should like to convey to you the position of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the forty-fifth report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015) and 2332 (2016) (S/2017/982).

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reiterates the concerns that it raised in its responses to previous reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the aforementioned Security Council resolutions. It stresses that the current report, despite some improvements, is still in dire need of greater clarity, transparency and professionalism in order to be credible. It also stresses that in preparing their reports, the authors should exhibit greater respect for the provisions of the above-mentioned United Nations resolutions, and in particular the principles of full commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic and the provision of humanitarian support to all those in need within the Syrian Arab Republic, wherever located, without politicization or selectivity.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic also draws attention to the following.

Like those before it, the current report is seriously flawed in that its authors have relied on politicized sources, referred to in the report as "open sources", that have no credibility and are unidentified, while they ignore not only reliable Government sources but even reports of United Nations representatives operating in Syria in which they acknowledge the efforts of the Syrian Government, its cooperation on humanitarian relief and the facilities that it provides for their work.

The report acknowledges that the United Nations has successfully delivered humanitarian assistance to millions of people in need within Syria, which would not have happened but for the facilities provided by the Syrian State and its institutions.

The Syrian Government deplores the continuing focus of the authors of the report on the humanitarian convoys operated by United Nations agencies in Syria and their insistence on overlooking the convoys being operated by the Syrian Arab Red Crescent in cooperation with other entities, including the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The Syrian Government regrets that the authors of the report speak of what they call "administrative impediments and deliberate restrictions imposed [...] by the parties to the conflict", saying that they impede humanitarian access to areas of

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instability. In this context, it affirms that it facilitates such access in every possible way, provided that the assistance is intended for Syrian civilians in need and that arrangements for its delivery are made in accordance with the applicable Syrian laws and regulations.

Despite their apparent willingness to turn over a new page in cooperation with the Syrian Government, the authors of the report are still periodically using it as an opportunity to relay unfounded claims and allegations with no basis in fact, in order to tarnish the image and undermine the efforts of the Syrian Government and serve the political objectives of certain States that have a harmful influence within the United Nations. Those objectives include promoting the idea that there is an "urgent need" to renew resolution 2165 (2014) and portraying it as a critical element of the humanitarian response in Syria.

The Government regrets that Secretariat officials continue to overuse the phrase "besieged areas" and provide misleading information about the situation in eastern Ghutah in Rif Dimashq, disregarding the fact that the inhabitants of eastern Ghutah are besieged from within by various armed terrorist groups who use civilians as human shields and seize, monopolize and distribute humanitarian aid to their supporters or sell it at extortionate prices to those in need, as happened previously in the eastern districts of Aleppo.

The Syrian Government rejects the Secretariat's continued promotion of cross-border assistance and asserts that such assistance is ineffective, with most of it falling into the hands of armed terrorist groups deployed in the targeted areas. The United Nations itself and the States seeking to renew resolution 2165 (2014) are well aware of this fact. The Syrian Government reiterates that the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic still cannot verify that such assistance is reaching the Syrian civilians for whom it is intended. We also remind you that the Bab al-Hawa, Bab al-Salamah and Ramtha crossings are entry points for arms, materiel and ammunition being smuggled to armed terrorist groups in Syria. The Government therefore strongly rejects the authors' continued bias towards, and praise of, Turkey and Jordan when discussing the delivery of cross-border assistance.

The Syrian Government reiterates that the Syrian Arab Red Crescent stands ready to monitor the delivery of cross-border humanitarian assistance to its intended recipients, which is an offer that the Secretariat has previously refused.

The Syrian Government once again condemns the fact that the authors of the report have ignored the blatant Turkish intervention in Syria and occupation of part of its territory, and reiterates its call to the Security Council to fulfil its responsibility to put an end to that occupation.

The Syrian Government insists that the authors of the report should tell Member States the truth about the substantial progress achieved in the delivery of humanitarian assistance to its intended recipients, which is thanks to the liberation by the Syrian Government and its allies of most of Syrian territory from the abomination of terrorism.

The Syrian Government categorically rejects the continued bias shown by the authors of the report towards the so-called international coalition and its members, which they do by simply listing the number of coalition air strikes on Syrian towns and failing to mention the coalition's acknowledgement that these strikes have caused hundreds of civilian deaths. The report furthermore avoids holding the coalition to account for the destruction it has inflicted on the city of Raqqah, for the massacres it has committed there and for its use of internationally proscribed weapons in Syria, as well as for other violations of international law, international

humanitarian law and human rights that constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity. It reiterates its call for the dissolution of this illegal coalition and the immediate cessation of its crimes against Syrians.

It is unfortunate that the authors of the report, notwithstanding frequent calls from the Syrian Government and members of the Security Council, are still failing to fulfil their responsibility to give the global public a true picture of the economic and humanitarian suffering caused by the unilateral coercive economic measures imposed on Syria by the United States of America, the European Union and other States. Those measures have had numerous adverse consequences, especially in the medical sector, affecting even the activities of United Nations agencies and foreign non-governmental organizations operating in Syria, and have led to the suspension of projects vital to responding to the needs of Syrians.

The Syrian Government stresses that United Nations officials working in Syria should have nothing to do with any separatist entities, illegal "local councils" or unlicensed civil associations. It also calls on the United Nations and its agencies to refrain from all use of the Fish Khabur crossing and not to cooperate with any organizations that have illegally entered Syrian territory via that crossing.

The Syrian Government stands by its position rejecting the continued efforts of the authors of the report to legitimize the terrorist groups deployed in Syria by using illegal designations for them, such as "non-State armed opposition" or "local authorities in areas controlled by non-State armed opposition groups". It also rejects the failure of the authors of the report to acknowledge that the so-called "non-State opposition groups" in the eastern Ghutah, Jawbar and Yarmuk areas are the Nusrah Front and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organizations or groups associated with them. The Syrian Government believes that the authors of the report should be held to account for their irresponsible approach, which is akin to attempts by terrorist organizations, such as the terrorist Levant Liberation Organization (Nusrah Front), to legitimize their presence in certain parts of Syria by calling their headquarters and affiliated entities "charitable associations".

The Syrian Government regrets the failure of the authors of the report, when stating that the humanitarian response plan was only 43 per cent funded, to acknowledge that donors are not meeting their financial commitments and are setting politicized conditions for the financing of international organizations operating in Syria, which is the principal obstacle that stands in the way of the humanitarian response to Syrians in need and Government plans aimed at rehabilitating infrastructure and returning refugees to their regions once security and stability are restored.

As to the number of international non-governmental organizations permitted to operate in the Syrian Arab Republic, there are to date 27 of them and not 23, as stated in the report. Applications submitted by other organizations for authorization to operate in Syria are being considered.

The Syrian Government reaffirms its position concerning the International Criminal Court and the calls made for the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic to be referred to that Court. It stresses that the jurisdiction of the Court does not apply to the situation in Syria and, moreover, that the Court has lost all credibility and has been transformed into a political tool used by certain parties to attack specific States for sordid political ends that have nothing to do with the requirements of justice. The Syrian Government also reiterates what it stated in its letter to the Secretary-General (A/71/799) regarding the serious legal flaws in General Assembly resolution 71/248 concerning the "international investigation and accountability mechanism".

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms its long-standing position that the crisis in Syria requires a political solution based on intra-Syrian

dialogue under Syrian leadership without foreign intervention and without preconditions. We remind you that the success of the political process and any significant improvement in the humanitarian situation will depend, above all, on creating a climate conducive to a serious and non-politicized international and regional commitment to fighting terrorism. The Syrian Government also stresses that it has played a constructive role in the success of the Astana and Geneva meetings and that it is ready to attend the Syrian national dialogue congress to be held in the Russian city of Sochi.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic once again calls on the Security Council to prevail on the States that support and finance armed terrorist groups to refrain from so doing, in implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions on combating terrorism and the financing thereof, in particular resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014), 2199 (2015) and 2253 (2015). Compliance with and enforcement of those resolutions is the key to resolving the situation in Syria and delivering full humanitarian assistance to those in need in Syria.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be issued as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Mounzer **Mounzer**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.
Minister Plenipotentiary